South African Airways Gets Its First 737 With Advanced-Technology Winglets

South African Airways today took delivery of its first advanced-technology Boeing 737 airplane. By doing so, the carrier became the first in Africa to operate a 737-800 with blended winglets. The airplane is expected to go into service June 2001.

"The addition of this new airplane to our fleet is a significant milestone for us," said Andrew Viljoen, chief executive and president of South African Airways. "We are looking forward to improving our route network with airplanes that can provide up to 4 percent better block fuel burn and a 0.5- to 0.7-decibel reduction in takeoff noise."

The blended winglets on the 737-800 curve out and up from the wingtip, reducing aerodynamic drag and boosting performance. They add about 5 feet (1.5 meters) to the airplane's total wingspan.

In March last year, South African Airways announced its decision to acquire 21 Next-Generation 737-800s through a combination of a direct purchase and lease agreement arranged by GATX Flightlease Management GmbH, an aircraft leasing partnership of GATX Capital Corporation and Flightlease AG, an SAir Group company. The airplanes delivered to South African Airways earlier this year will be retrofitted this summer with winglets.

"The commitment, skill and talent of our employees allow us to build the most technologically advanced single-aisle airplane in the sky and ensures that we will continue to offer the best solutions for our customers," said Doug Groseclose, vice president International Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

South African Airways' fleet of 54 Boeing airplanes operates its domestic regional and international network of scheduled passenger and cargo services. The airline carried close to six million passengers last year on its intercontinental services linking Africa to the Americas, Asia and Europe.

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